

Dave Kindred The saga of Pebble's fifth

A detour appears in the earliest plans for the Pebble Beach Golf Links. On the designer's plan dated April 1916, the fifth hole turns away from the Pacific Ocean and the sixth brings traffic back to the water's edge. The detour skirts five acres on a bluff at Stillwater Cove.

As to why that zigzag exists today on golf's most beautiful track, there is a delightful explanation.

The explanation's name is Mimi Jenkins.

She lived on those five acres.

She loved it there.

"Over my dead body," she told a caretaker, "will the Pebble Beach Company ever get this property."

So three U.S. Opens played around her. Bing Crosby played around her. One day Bob Hope stopped by Mimi's stone wall to chat. A ball bearing a Presidential seal, found in her backyard, suggested a mistake off the fifth tee by President Clinton.

Too busy chasing immortality to be curious, Jack Nicklaus passed the Jenkins place hundreds of times without knowing who lived there. "Why would I?" he said.

"Hmmp," says Dorothy Capen, a neighbor, "Mimi was much more interesting than Jack Nicklaus will ever be."

All but unnoticed behind giant oaks, Mimi Jenkins' home nevertheless interrupted a good idea.

Had the fifth hole been on the coastline, Pebble Beach's front nine would have finished with seven straight oceanside holes. But after the third and fourth take players to the water, it's like, whoops, let's hurry back to dry land. Let's climb this hill to a green we can't see. The green is maybe under that tree, maybe over there—all so ungainly that someone called the 156-yarder "the world's only dogleg par 3."

Not that anyone much complained. About Pebble Beach, to whom does one complain? God? The ultimate architect caused an ocean to carve away land until there stood revealed a golf course fit for Hogan.

Still, restless thinkers proposed to perfect perfection. They lusted after the Jenkins property. With those five acres, they could bring the fifth hole off that hill and down to the bluff's edge 50 feet above Stillwater Cove.

It has been said that the original design put Pebble's fifth on the water. If so, no record confirms it. What's certain is that Pebble Beach's founder, Samuel F.B. Morse, wanted the Jenkins land—first for

golf and second as a mulligan on a bad decision.

Hired in 1915 to liquidate a company's Monterey Peninsula landholdings, Morse himself bought the package. At Pebble Beach, he sold residential lots before realizing a golf course on the ocean would raise inland-property values.

So he bought back lots—all except for one. He failed to retrieve the five acres above Stillwater Cove. When the heirs of W.T. Beatty, a manufacturing magnate, finally agreed to sell the land and a house designed by Hearst Castle architect Julia Morgan, Morse couldn't buy. The Depression and World War II had left Pebble Beach in financial distress.

In 1944, the Beatty heirs sold for \$40,000 to a California rancher named Matt Jenkins.

Bing Crosby brought his clambake to Pebble Beach the next year.

Matt married Mimi in 1951.

Lucky man.

A quick story. She was 70 years old on The Day the Caretaker Got Naked. The Jenkins' caretaker, Tom Harris, thought his wife, Mrs. Jenkins' housekeeper, was in the house, alone, and so, sweaty from yard work, he undressed in a garden room, put his head around a door and called out sweetly, "Oh, darling, here I am."

Mimi answered, "Yes, Tom?" Which promoted in the caretaker an episode of serious speed-dressing. Only years later did Harris confess to Mrs. Jenkins what he'd hidden behind that door.

"I didn't want to shock you," he said.

She said, "Tom, you would have been shocked. I would have been thrilled."

The original Stillwater Cove house burned down in 1956, an event remembered by Mimi's daughter Pam Grossman for her mother's tenacity: "As the fire roared, Mom threw on a brown skirt and yel-

The old hole was so ungainly they called it 'the world's only dogleg par 3.'

BEHIND THIS COLFER on the sixth fairway at Pebble Beach is the Jenkins Estate, the planned site of the new fifth hole.

New 5th hole planned for P.B. Golf Links

BY ALEX HULANICKI
Herald Staff Writer

A new fifth hole of the Pebble Beach Golf Links is planned along the bluffs above Stillwater Cove on what was the Jenkins Estate, about 5.5 acres of eucalyptus and pine trees the Pebble Beach Co. has purchased for

'It is a substantial improvement to the golf course.'

—Mark Stillwell,
Pebble Beach Co. official

signers approved moving the hole.

Within 90 days, the comp will submit an application to Monterey County Planning Department for a permit to create the new hole and two residential lots inland from the hole. Existing fifth hole path, located in the shade of

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low sweater. Then she carried out the family safe."

Born Camilla Brown on Jan. 26, 1913, Mimi came from old money first made in railroads, banks and clipper ships sailing to the Orient.

Her father was a New York Congressman who had been best man at FDR's wedding. As a child, she bounced on Woodrow Wilson's knee (and pronounced the White House lamb chops distasteful).

She believed women could do anything. She told a reporter that at age 7 she pestered her parents about flying until they drew straws to "decide who was going to take the brat up in the open-air cockpit so that she would stop talking. It didn't work at all."

She became a pilot. During World War II, she ferried military personnel and dragged artillery targets. Her first husband died on a bombing run. On her 80th birthday, given a flying lesson in a 747 simulator, she told the instructor, "Don't bother yourself, I know what I'm doing."

Her grandson, Mike Antoncich IV, says, "Granny was a lady of her class and time, humble and generous, not ostentatious in any way because she felt no need to impress anyone. And while she wanted to like everyone, she took no guff—not even from those Pebble Beach jerks. Hey, to me, she was as big as Pebble Beach. It was cool."

Cool Granny Jenkins.

A Katharine Hepburn role, maybe Jessica Tandy.

Never interested in golf, she was a cook, snorkeler, tennis player, skeet-and-trap shooter, community volunteer. Matt Jenkins' passion, sailing, led to the creation of the Stillwater Yacht Club. They entertained friends at home and in an old log cabin set near the bluff's edge and christened "Mimi's Bar & Grill."

Mimi favored vodka with a twist, sipped slowly. A note to a friend: "We do have Parking, Plumbing and Alcohol, so do stop by anytime."

Sam Morse stopped by often, invariably proposing to buy the property he'd sold.

"Morse was always leaning on Matt to sell," says Mimi's daughter Pam, "but Matt said there's no sense in putting a price on it because there is no way anyone had enough money for him to give it up."

Matt's death in 1982 changed nothing. Mimi and Pebble Beach coexisted civilly. The company

paid for windows broken by tee shots. It raised a privacy fence. Pebble provided passes for her friends during tournaments. But there was one moment.

First—stand in the Jenkins living room at a glass wall 16 feet high. Imagine the mighty seascape, the Pacific everywhere. Mist falls from waves disintegrating against boulders. Cove water is still beneath sailboats. A graceful pier extends from the cliff into the ocean.

"Once, we returned from a trip," Mimi Jenkins told a reporter, "and we went to look at the cove. It was a bright moonlit night, and we looked out—and the pier was gone."

A storm had destroyed it. Promising to rebuild, Pebble did nothing. Sailors felt the company wished them ill.

Promises were yet unfulfilled two years later when the company sought governmental permission for a third golf course on the Monterey Peninsula's coastline. Permission came with one condition: The company would permit public access to all its beaches.

Done, Pebble said.

Not so fast, Mimi Jenkins said.

"That's the one time I saw her dig in her heel and get almost nasty with Pebble Beach," says Pam.

In contrast to Morse, whom Mimi Jenkins liked she never cared for a successor, Tom Oliver. She didn't like the way he had given away what was no his—her beach at Stillwater Cove.

"The amazing thing," says Tom Harris, the Jenkins caretaker at the time, "is that I researched the property and discovered that Mimi owned the beach not just at the high-tide mark, which is customary, but all the way out to low tide."

At which point, Mimi's political gene kicked in. She proposed a deal to Pebble Beach. Build that pier. Then she'd discuss access to her beach.

Which explains how Pebble Beach came to build The Links at Spanish Bay. It also explains why Oliver coughed up \$850,000 to build The Matthew C. Jenkins Pier.

Cool, Granny.

Mimi Jenkins died March 7, 1995. She was 82. A year later, her two daughters and son sold the Stillwater Cove property to Pebble Beach for \$8.25 million.

The Jenkins house is to be demolished. The land is to be divided into three pieces, two for private homes. The third piece will end the 82-year detour. Along the bluff's edge will be built a new fifth hole, a par 3 of fearsome beauty.

As for the Jenkins' log cabin that rang with the laughter of friends, the plan is to move it near the 10th tee for use as a halfway house. If Pebble Beach knows what's good for it, it will leave up the sign that reads "Mimi's Bar & Grill." ■

